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ABSTRACT

The annual National Education Association opinion polls provide data comparing opinions held by the public and teachers on current and ongoing issues of concern to the education community. The 1987 polls focused on priorities for federal, state, and local government expenditures, on measures to improve education in the basics, and on sources of discipline problems in the schools. This year's surveys also explored opinions regarding several recommendations to ensure teacher competence, the importance of having certified teachers in every classroom, and the value of various indicators of public school performance. This report first presents highlights of the results of the survey and a description of the sample. It is organized into several sections: (1) priorities for government expenditure; (2) K-12 teacher compensation; (3) willingness to pay for increases in teachers' salaries; (4) improving the quality of education; (5) improving the quality of teaching; (6) discipline in the schools; and (7) public/private school enrollment patterns. (JD)

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NEA Research/ Gallup Opinion Polls

Public and K-12 Teacher Members

Spring 1987 Annual Public Polls

SP 032 046

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Professional and Organizational Development Research Division

NEA Research/ Gallup Opinion Polls

Public and K-12 Teacher Members

Spring 1987 Annual Public Polls

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Foreword

The annual NEA Research/Gallup Public and K-12 Teacher Member Opinion Polls provide data comparing opinions held by the public and teachers on current and ongoing issues of concern to the education community. The 1987 polls focused on priorities for federal, state, and local government expenditures, on measures to improve education in the basics, and on sources of discipline problems in the schools. This year's surveys also explored opinion regarding several recommendations to ensure teacher competence, the importance of having certified teachers in every classroom, and the value of various indicators of public school performance. Topics that NEA revisits on a regular basis, including appropriate levels of K-12 teacher compensation, willingness to pay higher taxes for education and for teacher compensation, and public/private school enrollment patterns, were also surveyed in the 1987 NEA Research/Gallup Public and K-12 Teacher Member Opinion Polls reported in this publication.

These annual polls are a particularly valuable addition to data sources needed for informed decision-making. They are the only ongoing source of opinion data on educational issues that provides companion information from nationally representative samples of the general public and teachers. In addition to intra-series comparisons, this data base allows for inter-series comparisons with other education-related surveys conducted by the NEA and other organizations.

This report first presents highlights of the results of the surveys and a description of the samples. The highlighted results, as well as the detailed question-by-question analyses that follow, are organized into seven sections:

Priorities for Government Expenditure

K-12 Teacher Compensation

Willingness to Pay for Increases in Teachers' Salaries

Improving the Quality of Education

Improving the Quality of Teaching

Discipline in the Schools

Public/Private School Enrollment Patterns

Readers desiring additional information or assistance in using and interpreting the results of this report may contact Carolyn E. Summers of NEA Research.

May 1988

Highlights Of The Results

Priorities for Government Expenditure

The vast majority of the public and teacher members favor increases in government spending on public education at the federal, state, or local level of government (public 78%, teacher members 94%). Nearly half the public (45%) and close to two-thirds of the teacher members polled (61%) favor increased spending at *all* levels of government. Support for increased spending on education cuts across all demographic categories for both teacher members and the public.

Even though many would like to see all levels of government contribute more to education in general, the state is the preferred source (public 45%, teacher members 59%). The state government is also the level of government that is assumed by the plurality (public 41%, teacher members 53%) to now be the primary source of educational funding.

K-12 Teacher Compensation

Not only does the public say more funding is needed for education, but they also see a deficiency in teachers' salaries. People who have some figure in mind for how much teachers earn on average believe beginning teachers make about $18,000 and teachers with 15 years of experience make about $25,900, which is very close to the 1986-87 actual average teacher salary of $26,704. However, the majority of Americans think these salaries are too low. On average they would like to see new teachers earn $20,900 and experienced teachers earn $30,300.

The people closely connected to the schools—parents of school-age children, young adults who have recently left the education system, and those who say they know a lot about the schools—are all particularly likely to say teachers aren't paid enough. In addition, those people who have benefitted from education, people from higher socioeconomic strata, are also more likely to believe teachers' salaries are too low.

Willingness to Pay for Increases in Teachers' Salaries

Not only do people generally believe teachers are underpaid, they also overwhelmingly endorse raising more funds to increase the amount of money paid to teachers. More than four in ten (43%) of the public and two-thirds of the teacher members polled are even willing to have this additional revenue raised through higher taxes. In the last year, there has been a decline in the proportion favoring increases even if it means higher taxes.

Improving the Quality of Education

While people favor channeling more money into the educational system and into teachers' salaries, they also believe it takes more than money alone to improve the quality of education. Other studies have found that the public believes the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic are the essential skills that must be taught by our schools. Both the public and teacher members believe that a number of different strategies tested would "help a lot" to ensure that students learn the basics. A majority of the public feel nine of ten suggested approaches would "help a lot." Seven of the ten measures received the endorsement of a majority of the teacher members surveyed.

The greatest support is given for items that would provide a better learning environment, such as more individual attention to students by teachers, providing the opportunity for more parental involvement, and enforcing attendance requirements. Teacher members are less enthusiastic than the public about approaches that require students to take more classes in English and math or pass standardized tests to advance from junior to senior high school, or the idea of principals spending more time motivating students.

While the public is in favor of making changes to improve the quality of education, they are not particularly

clear about how to measure progress. People generally feel that indicators such as the percentage of illiterate people in society or the dropout rate are very useful tools for measuring progress, but they don't discriminate much on these indicators. Among the public, each of the indicators is thought to be very useful by between 44 and 51 percent of the respondents. Teacher members, however, clearly see remedial course enrollment as a very useful indicator.

Improving the Quality of Teaching

The public tends to equate the quality of education with the quality of the teacher. More than eight in ten believe it is important to have a certified teacher in every class, even if this costs the public in taxes or cutbacks in other services. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is widespread support for ensuring professional competence of current and future teachers. Two-thirds of the public believe each of six strategies suggested would "help a lot" to ensure quality teachers. The most favored option is requiring students graduating from teacher training programs to meet specific graduation standards. Tied for second are requiring teachers to pass rigorous exams evaluating their knowledge of the subject they will teach before certifying them and requiring teachers to successfully complete an internship under an experienced teacher before certifying them.

Interestingly, nearly as many teacher members also believe four of the six items would "help a lot." While the public tends not to discriminate too much among the strategies, teacher members show a clear preference for strategies that address training and preparation of teacher candidates before entering the profession. Teacher members most frequently think internships would help a lot, followed by specific graduation standards. Teacher members don't see standardized tests in either subject matter or pedagogy as an effective method to upgrade teacher quality.

Discipline in the Schools

Over the years, the public has perceived discipline as the number one problem plaguing American schools. When questioned about 14 possible reasons for discipline problems, people readily show that they consider the school discipline problem to be part of a larger societal problem. Both members of the general population and NEA K-12 teacher members consider the failure of parents to discipline children at home, the breakup of the traditional family and family values, and increased drug and alcohol use by young people as the three top reasons for the discipline problems in schools. In fact, a majority, 58 percent of the public and 81 percent of teacher members, place the primary responsibility for these disciplinary problems squarely on parents and society, while only 21 percent of the public and 7 percent of teacher members hold the schools primarily responsible. The feeling that the schools are not in a position to control this situation is further evidenced by the finding that a majority believe there is not much more the schools can do to deal with the discipline problem (public, 58%; teachers, 64%).

Public/Private School Enrollment Patterns

NEA teacher members are more likely than the general public to send their children to public schools (91% and 87%, respectively).

The Surveys

The findings just summarized, which are reported in detail in the following sections, are from two national telephone interview surveys conducted for the NEA by The Gallup Organization, Inc. One survey consisted of 2,132 telephone interviews among a nationally representative sample of adults age 18 and over. The other survey consisted of 2,107 telephone interviews among a nationally representative sample of practicing K-12 teacher members of the NEA. Both samples were also stratified to ensure representation of the six NEA regions of the country. Interviewing of the general public took place between April 10 and May 25, 1987; interviewing of K-12 teacher members took place between May 21 and June 14, 1987. The margin of sampling error for both surveys was plus or minus two percent. **Table 1** presents a description of the two samples on key demographic characteristics.

TABLE 1.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLES

Characteristics	General Public		K-12 Teacher Members	
	Weighted percentage	Actual number of interviews	Weighted percentage	Actual number of interviews
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**(2,132)**	**100.0%**	**(2,107)**
SEX				
Male	47.3%	(1,065)	28.5%	(580)
Female	52.7	(1,067)	71.5	(1,527)
	100.0%	(2,132)	100.0%	(2,107)
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White	83.6%	(1,821)	89.1%	(1,854)
Black	9.8	(189)	6.6	(158)
Hispanic	4.5	(89)	2.5	(57)
Other/Undesignated	2.1	(33)	1.8	(38)
	100.0%	(2,132)	100.0%	(2,107)
AGE				
Under 30	26.6%	(577)	8.1%	(179)
30–39	23.7	(580)	34.1	(719)
40–49	14.9	(363)	35.1	(729)
50 and older	34.3	(607)	21.6	(458)
Undesignated	.5	(5)	1.1	(22)
	100.0%	(2,132)	100.0%	(2,107)
EDUCATION				
Master's degree	*	*	48.0%	(1,004)
Bachelor's degree	21.6%	(658)	51.0	(1,084)
Some college	20.3	(513)	.5	(11)
High school graduate	39.9	(745)	0.0	(0)
Less than high school graduate	18.3	(213)	0.0	(0)
Undesignated	.1	(3)	.5	(8)
	100.0%	(2,132)	100.0%	(2,107)
NEA REGION				
NORTHEAST: ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NJ, NY, PA	20.3%	(355)	20.4%	(352)
MID-ATLANTIC: OH, KY, MD, DE, WV, VA, NC	17.2	(363)	16.2	(351)
SOUTHEAST: AR, LA, TN, MS, AL, GA, SC, FL	15.0	(354)	12.5	(352)
MIDWEST: ND, SD, MN, IA, MO, MI, WI, IL, IN	17.2	(351)	20.3	(348)
WEST: WY, UT, AZ, CO, NM, NE, KS, OK, TX	14.8	(351)	12.7	(353)
PACIFIC: WA, OR, MT, ID, NV, CA	15.5	(358)	18.1	(351)
	100.0%	(2,132)	100.0%	(2,107)
POSITION CLASSIFICATION				
Regular classroom teacher			76.6%	(1,624)
Other active teacher			23.9	(489)
Undesignated			.4	(9)
			100.7%**	(2,122)**
LEVEL OF ASSIGNMENT				
Elementary			50.0%	(1,065)
Intermediate			25.9	(537)
Senior high			29.6	(620)
Undesignated			.4	(10)
			105.9%**	(2,232)**
YEARS IN TEACHING				
Less than 5			10.3%	(219)
5–9			16.8	(359)
10–14			22.9	(479)
15–19			22.4	(472)
20 or more			27.6	(578)
			100.0%	(2,107)

*Separate statistics are not available for these categories.

**Exceeds 100% and 2,107 because of multiple classifications or assignments.

Priorities For Government Expenditure

Priorities for Spending by the Federal Government

The question: *To begin, I'd like your views on how each level of government—federal, state, and local—uses the tax money it raises. First, I will read a list of some areas where the* ***federal government*** *is spending your tax money. For each, tell me if you feel the federal government should spend* ***more*** *for this purpose,* ***less*** *for this purpose, or if you feel the amount now being spent is* ***about right***. (Items listed in **Table 2**.)

Two-thirds of the American public (66%) believe the federal government should be spending more money on public elementary and secondary schools (**Figure 1; Table 2**). When the public is questioned about eight different possible areas for increased federal spending, public elementary and secondary schools receive the highest priority ranking. It is interesting to note that national concern about public education is so high; the public even gives it a slightly higher priority than medical research (63%), at a time when concern and fear about the spread of AIDS are great.

FIGURE 1.
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATIONAL FUNDING
Priorities for Federal Government Spending

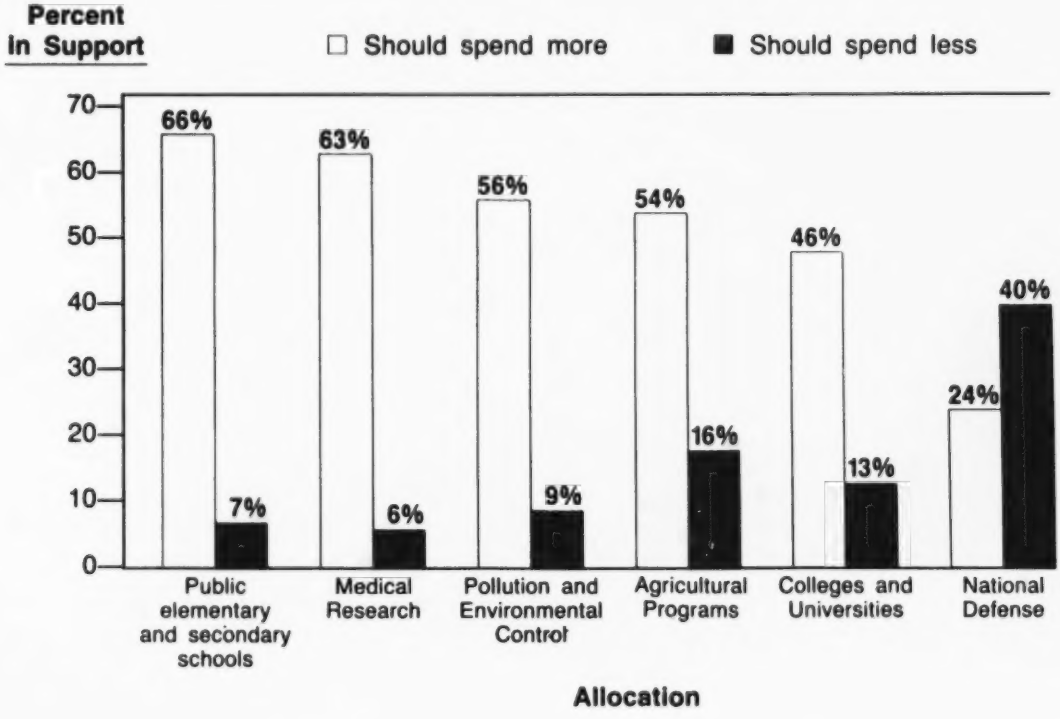


TABLE 2.
PUBLIC PRIORITIES FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Percent stating government: should spend more	should spend less	spending is about right	Don't know	Total
Public elementary and secondary schools	66%	7%	24%	3%	100%
Medical research	63	6	28	3	100
Pollution and environmental control	56	9	31	4	100
Agricultural programs	54	16	25	5	100
Colleges and universities	46	13	37	4	100
Public housing and welfare programs	36	31	30	3	100
National defense	24	40	33	3	100
Foreign aid and international relations	10	59	26	5	100

NEA K-12 teacher members overwhelmingly endorse increased federal spending on public elementary and secondary education (**Table 3**). Teacher members are more likely to favor increased federal spending for education (81%) than any other option posed to them. Teacher members more strongly endorse increased federal spending on education (81%) than does the general public (66%). Teacher members are also more likely than the public (54% vs. 46%) to support increased federal spending for higher education.

TABLE 3.
PREFERENCES FOR INCREASED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Teacher members	General public
Public elementary and secondary schools	81%	66%
Medical research	62	63
Pollution and environmental control	57	56
Colleges and universities	54	46
Agricultural programs	50	54
Public housing and welfare programs	30	36
National defense	11	24
Foreign aid and international relations	7	10
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

Priorities for Spending by the State Government

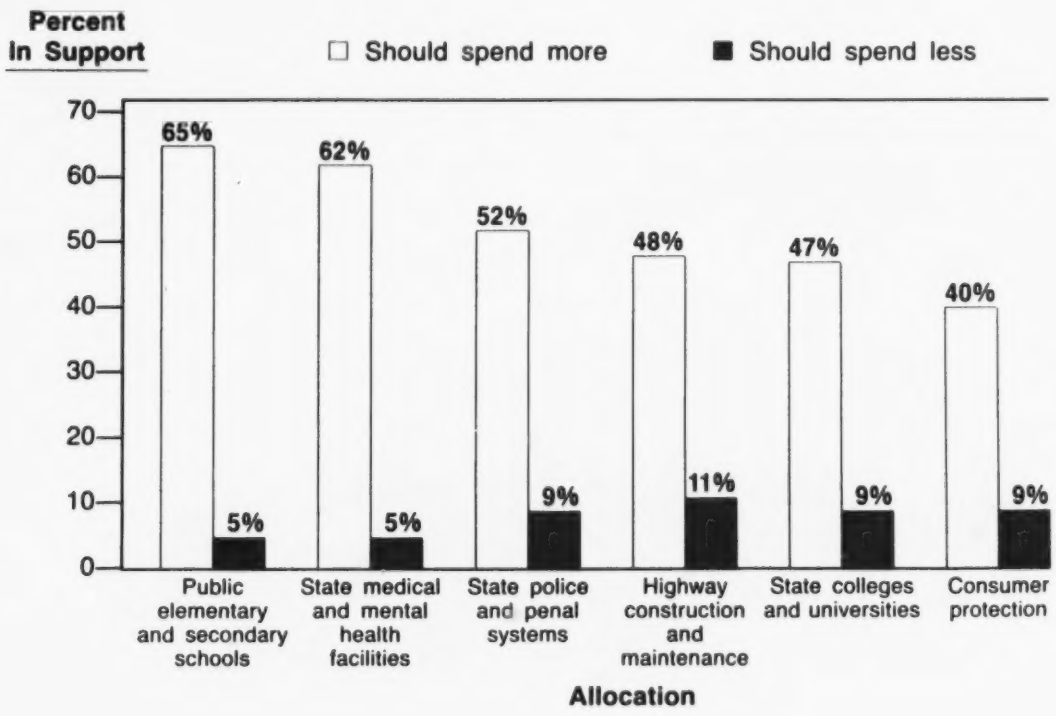
The question: *Next, I will read a list of some areas where the **state government** is spending your tax money. For each, tell me if you feel the state government should spend **more** for this purpose, **less** for this purpose, or if you feel the amount now being spent is **about right.*** (Items listed in **Table 4.**)

Two-thirds of the American public (65%) believe that state government should be spending more money in public elementary and secondary education (**Figure 2; Table 4**). As for spending at the federal level, when considering priorities for increased spending at the state level, the public ranks public education higher than seven other areas.

TABLE 4.
PUBLIC PRIORITIES FOR STATE GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Percent stating government: should spend more	should spend less	spending is about right	Don't know	Total
Public elementary and secondary schools	65%	5%	28%	2%	100%
State medical and mental health facilities	62	5	30	3	100
State police and penal system	52	9	35	4	100
Highway construction and maintenance	48	11	40	1	100
State colleges and universities	47	9	41	3	100
Consumer protection	40	9	41	4	100
Welfare programs	28	37	33	2	100
Parks and recreation areas	27	12	60	1	100

FIGURE 2.
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATIONAL FUNDING
Priorities for State Government Spending



NEA K-12 teacher members strongly endorse increased spending on public elementary and secondary education by state government (87%), while they provide less support for increased state spending on a range of other options (**Table 5**). The public's and teachers' attitudes on state spending are similar in that both groups give public elementary and secondary education their highest priority; however, teachers more strongly endorse increased spending in this area (87%) than does the public (65%). Teachers also more frequently suggest increased state spending on higher education (teachers, 61%; public, 47%).

TABLE 5.
PREFERENCES FOR INCREASED STATE GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Teacher members	General public
Public elementary and secondary schools	87%	65%
State colleges and universities	61	47
State medical and mental health facilities	57	62
State police and penal system	53	52
Highway construction and maintenance	35	48
Parks and recreation areas	27	27
Consumer protection	25	40
Welfare programs	22	28
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

Priorities for Spending by Local Government

The question: *Now, thinking about areas where the **local government** is spending your tax money.... Should local government be spending **more** for this purpose, **less** for this purpose, or is the amount now being spent **about right**?* (Items listed in **Table 6**.)

The majority of the American public (57%) endorses increased spending for public elementary and secondary schools by local governments (**Figure 3; Table 6**). At the local level, the public places higher priority on public education as a focus of increased spending than on a range of other critical and much-needed services.

The vast majority of NEA K-12 teacher members (71%) endorse increased spending on education at the local level (**Table 7**). Indeed, they give this higher priority than other social problems facing communities. While teacher members are like the public in ranking public education highest among a range of competing alternatives, teachers endorse increased spending by local governments for education (71%) more strongly than does the public (57%).

Figure 4 summarizes the public's attitudes on increased federal, state, and local government expenditure for public elementary and secondary schools and for colleges and universities.

TABLE 6.
PUBLIC PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Percent stating government: should spend more	should spend less	spending is about right	Don't know	Total
Public elementary and secondary schools	57%	6%	35%	2%	100%
Law enforcement and crime	55	5	39	1	100
Road construction and maintenance	48	7	44	1	100
Water and sewerage system	35	7	55	3	100
Fire prevention and control	33	4	61	2	100
Mass transportation	32	14	46	8	100
Parks and recreation areas	29	10	59	2	100
Trash and refuse collection	25	9	62	4	100

FIGURE 3.
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATIONAL FUNDING
Priorities for Local Government Spending

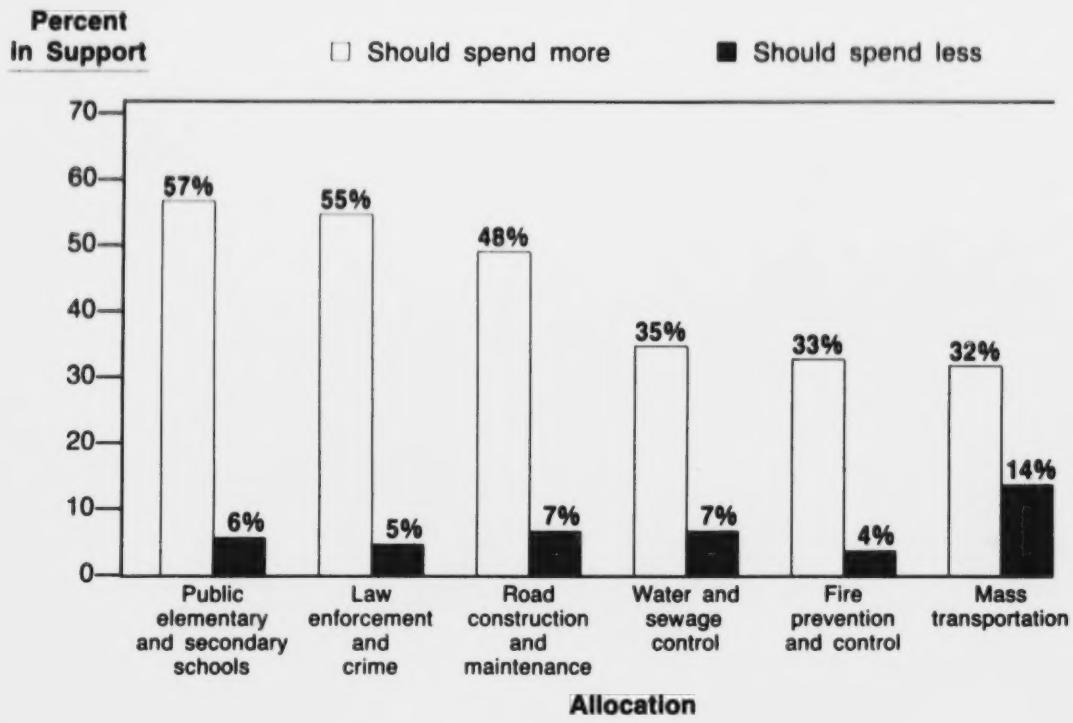


TABLE 7.
PREFERENCES FOR INCREASED LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

Expenditure category	Teacher members	General public
Public elementary and secondary schools ...	71%	57%
Law enforcement and crime	46	55
Road construction and maintenance	34	48
Mass transportation	30	32
Parks and recreation areas	29	29
Water and sewerage system	24	35
Fire prevention and control	21	33
Trash and refuse collection	19	25
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

Priorities for Increased Government Spending on Education

The vast majority of the American public (78%) favor increased spending on education at *some* level of government (**Table 8**). Just slightly less than half (45%) believe *all* levels of government should be spending more on public education. The public seems to prefer increased spending at the federal and state levels (66% and 65%, respectively) over the local level (57%).

Nearly all of NEA teacher members (94%) also endorse increased spending on public education at some level of government; six in ten teacher members (61%) favor increased spending at *all* levels of government. This is quite a bit higher than the general public (78%, some level; and 45%, all levels). Like the general

FIGURE 4.
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATIONAL FUNDING
Support for Increased Government Funding of Education

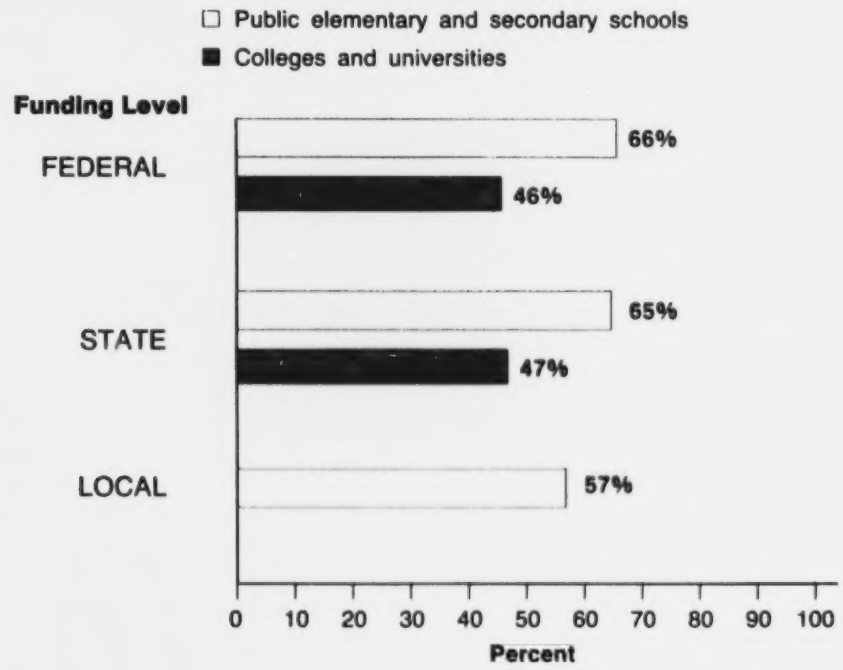


TABLE 8.
PRIORITIES FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON EDUCATION

Support more spending	Teacher members	General public
At at least one level of government	94%	78%
At the federal level	81	66
At the state level	87	65
At the local level	71	57
At all levels of government	61	45
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

public, teacher members are less likely to endorse increased spending at the local level than at the state and federal levels. Teacher members differ from the public and even the college-educated public in having a slight preference for increased spending at the state (87%) compared to the federal level (81%).

The belief that more money should be spent on education is quite widespread among the general public. In every demographic subgroup considered, the majority favor increased spending for education at some level of government. By and large, there are practically no differences in the patterns of support for increased spending on education by sex, educational attainment, income, and whether a respondent's school-age child is in a public or private school. Some differences appear in other characteristics:

- Those who are most likely to have children in the educational system (those under age 45 and those with pre-school or school-age children) and Blacks are more strongly in favor of increased spending on education.
- Those who are likely to have liberal attitudes (union members, Democrats, and those who identify themselves as liberal) more strongly support increased spending on education than do the more conservative.
- Those residing in the NEA Western region are less likely to support increased spending for education than those from the other five NEA regions.
- Those who report quite a lot of knowledge about the schools more strongly support increased funding for education than individuals who report little or no knowledge about the schools.

The belief that more money should be spent on education is also pervasive among teacher members. For example, in every demographic subgroup of teacher members considered, at least 88 percent endorse increased spending by at least one level of government. Similarly, in every subgroup considered, at least 47 percent favor increased spending at *all* levels. There are small, but not statistically significant, differences in responses to these questions by sex, household income, academic degree status, and type of teaching position. Some differences appear in other characteristics:

- The young, those with fewer years of experience, those with contract salaries under $20,000, and those with pre-school or school-age children more strongly endorse increased spending than do the older, more experienced, and higher paid teacher members, or those without school-age children. These relationships suggest that those who see themselves or their children benefitting from increased spending tend to endorse it more strongly.
- Blacks, Hispanics, Democrats, and liberals more strongly endorse increased spending than do Whites, Republicans, and conservatives.
- Those from the NEA Northeast region show the least support for increased spending, whereas those from the Southeast region show the highest.

Funding for Education: Knowledge of Major Source

The question: *Thinking now about the sources of funding for your local public schools.... To the best of your knowledge, which level of government—federal, state, or local—now provides the largest share of the money?*

One-sixth (18%) of the public has the misperception that the federal government is the primary source of funding for public education (**Table 9**). Only 26 percent believe that local government contributes the largest share of the money for public schooling, while 41 percent think the state is the largest contributor. **Figures 5** and **6** illustrate trends in federal, state, and local revenues as a portion of total school revenues. The proportion of total school revenues from the federal government has been decreasing. The proportions coming from the state and local levels mirror each other: as the proportion from the state increases, the proportion from the local level decreases, and vice versa.

Only 10 percent of K-12 teacher members believe that the federal government provides the major source of funding for the public schools. Teacher members' knowledge is better than that of the general public or even the college-educated public: 18 percent of the public and 14 percent of the college-educated public believe that the federal government is the major source of funding for the school.

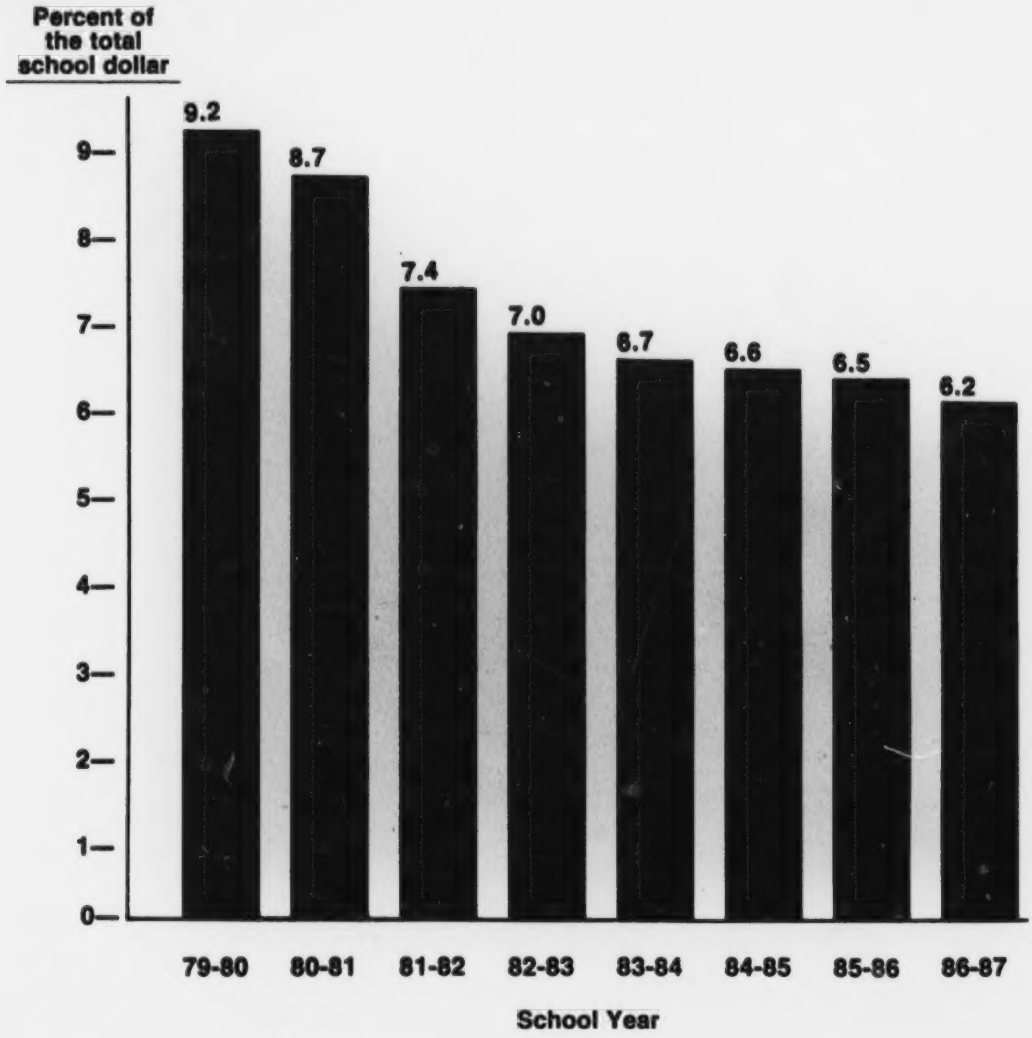
TABLE 9.
PERCEPTIONS OF SOURCE OF LARGEST SHARE OF FUNDS FOR LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Level of government	Teacher members	General public	College-educated public
Federal	10%	18%	14%
State	53	41	43
Local	32	26	37
Don't know	5	15	6
Total	100%	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)	(658)

There is considerable demographic variation among the general public on knowledge of the major source of funding for the schools. Males, Whites, those 25 years of age or older, the more educated, higher income individuals, residents of the NEA Northeast region, conservatives, those with pre-school-age children, and those who have some knowledge about the schools are most likely to report that the majority of the funding for public education comes from local government. Blacks, those who are 18 to 24 years of age, those without a high school diploma, low income individuals, those from the NEA Pacific or Southeast regions, liberals, those without pre-school-age children, and those with little or no knowledge of the schools either believe that the state or federal government provides the major source of funding for the schools, or do not know.

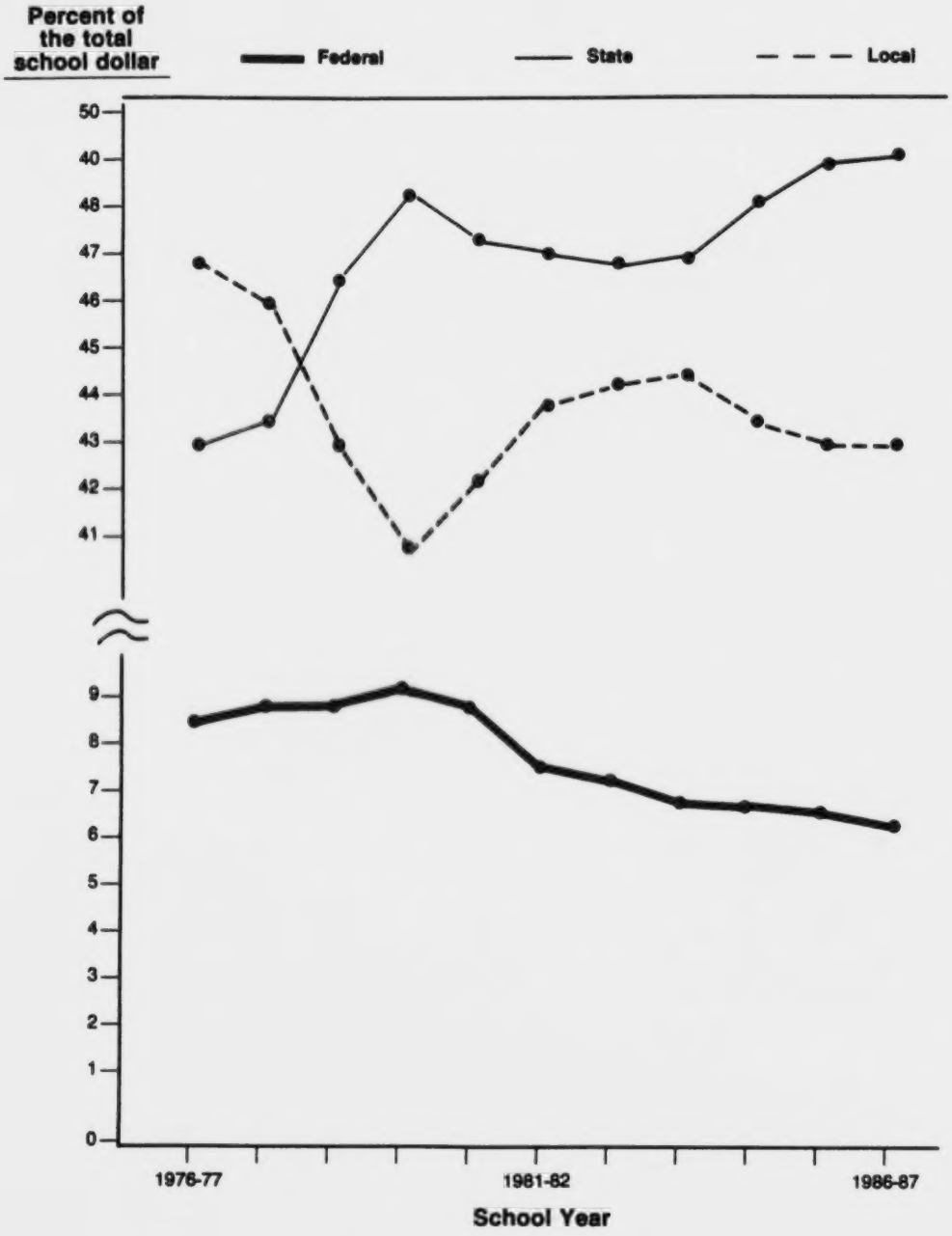
There are few demographic subgroup differences among teacher members in terms of awareness of the major source of funding for schools. Blacks, Hispanics, and residents of the NEA Southern region are more likely to have misconceptions than are Whites and residents of the NEA Midwest region.

FIGURE 5.
FEDERAL SCHOOL REVENUES
Elementary-Secondary Schools



Source: National Education Association

FIGURE 6.
FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL SCHOOL REVENUES (K-12) AS PERCENT OF TOTAL REVENUES
School Years 1976-77 to 1986-87



Funding for Education: Preferred Major Source

The question: *What level of government do you feel **should** provide the largest share of money for the public schools?*

When queried as to the level of government that should be responsible for the largest share of the funds for public education, 45 percent of the public report the state, 27 percent report the federal government, and 23 percent report local government **(Table 10)**. Among teacher members, 59 percent report the state government, 20 percent say local government, and 17 percent say the federal government. Teacher members show stronger preference for support by state government (59%) than does the general public (45%) or the college-educated public (48%). However, teacher members are like the college-educated public in placing minimal importance on the federal government: only 17 percent of each group believes the federal government should provide the major source of funding for schools.

TABLE 10.
PREFERRED SOURCE OF LARGEST SHARE OF FUNDS FOR LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Level of government	Teacher members	General public	College-educated public
Federal	17%	27%	17%
State	59	45	48
Local	20	23	33
Don't know	4	5	2
Total	100%	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)	(658)

Among the general public, the following are much more likely to believe that the largest share of funds for local schools should come from the federal government:

Liberals	32%
Democrats	34%
Blacks	47%
Those without a high school diploma	34%
Union members	35%
Those with incomes of less than $20,000	35%
Residents of the NEA Northeast region	36%

Those from the NEA Western region are the least likely among the NEA regions to support a lead role for the federal government. Interestingly, there are no significant differences by gender or by whether the respondents have pre-school- or school-age children.

Among K-12 teacher members, no differences in opinion on appropriate source of the largest share of school funds may be attributed to gender, level of instruction, or degree held. There are some differences in belief among teacher members on this issue:

- Democrats as well as traditionally Democratic groups (Blacks and Hispanics, the young, liberals, and those with low household incomes) are more likely to prefer that the major role for public education funding be in the hands of the federal government than are Whites, older individuals, Republicans, conservatives, and individuals with higher household incomes.
- Less experienced teacher members, those with lower salaries, and teacher members with other than a regular classroom assignment are also more likely to prefer that the federal government be the major source of dollars for public education than are the more experienced, higher paid, and regular classroom teachers.
- Those from the NEA Northeast region are more likely to support a major role by the federal or the local government in comparison to those from the Pacific region, who support the state government.

K-12 Teacher Compensation

Perceived Salary Levels

The questions: *Thinking about yearly salaries for beginning full-time teachers who have four-year college degrees. . . . To the best of your knowledge, how much do beginning public school teachers in your school district get paid per year to teach*?

Now, let's think about full-time public school teachers who have 15 years of experience. . . . To the best of your knowledge, how much do such experienced teachers in your school district get paid per year to teach?

On average, the American public estimates the current salary for a beginning teacher in their local school district to be about $18,000. The mean estimate for the current salary of a teacher with 15 years of experience is $25,900. The public's average estimate of the experienced teacher's salary is remarkably close to the 1986-87 actual average salary of $26,704.

However, a large percentage of the public displays a lack of familiarity with current levels of teacher compensation. Just over a third (37%) could not make—or chose not to make—any estimate of the current salary levels of beginning teachers; 39 percent provided no such estimate for experienced teachers' salaries (**Table 11**).

TABLE 11.
PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF K-12 TEACHERS' SALARIES

Beginning teachers' salaries	
All who made an estimate	63%
Don't know	37
Total	100%
Mean estimate for beginning teachers' salaries	$18,000
Experienced teachers' salaries	
All who made an estimate	61%
Don't know	39
Total	100%
Mean estimate for experienced teachers' salaries	$25,900

Significant differences in the proportions who offered an estimate are apparent by educational attainment, income, age, status as parents, knowledge of the schools, and sex. The tendency to make a salary estimate increases with level of education, income, and self-reported knowledge about the schools. Persons age 65 or older or those with no pre-school- or school-age children—groups who are likely to have little contact with the schools—are less likely than younger persons and those with school-age children to provide an estimate of current salary levels. Women are much less likely than men to provide salary estimates for beginning teachers, but this relationship doesn't persist when considering estimates of experienced teachers' salaries.

Although the tendency to make a salary estimate varies by demographic subgroup, the level of salary estimates does not. Estimates for salaries of experienced teachers vary by income level, with higher income individuals estimating higher salaries than lower income individuals. However, there is no such relationship between income and the level of estimates of beginning teachers' salaries.

Individuals who reside in the NEA Pacific and Northeast regions provide higher salary estimates for beginning and experienced teachers than those who reside in the Southeast region; these differentials probably reflect the fact that average salaries are higher in the Pacific and Northeast regions than in the Southeast region.

General Impression of Current Salary Levels

The questions: *Do you think that beginning teachers' salaries in your school district are* ***too high***, ***about right***, *or* ***too low***?

Do you think that experienced teachers' salaries in your school district are ***too high***, ***about right***, *or* ***too low***? (Asked of those who did not estimate current salary levels.)

The majority of the American public believe that public school teachers are underpaid: 53 percent believe the salary of beginning teachers is too low, and the comparable figure for experienced teachers is 56 percent (**Figure 7; Table 12**). Very few believe that either experienced teachers (5%) or beginning teachers (6%) are overpaid, although a nontrivial proportion express no opinion on the salary level of new (11%) and experienced teachers (13%).

TABLE 12.
PUBLIC EVALUATION OF K-12 TEACHERS' SALARIES

Evaluation of current salary level*	Beginning teachers' salaries	Experienced teachers' salaries
Too low	53%	56%
About right	30	26
Too high	6	5
Don't know	11	13
Total	100%	100%

*Results derived from a comparison of perceived current salary and suggested salary. Respondents who were unable to estimate current salary levels were asked if current salaries are too high, too low, or about right.

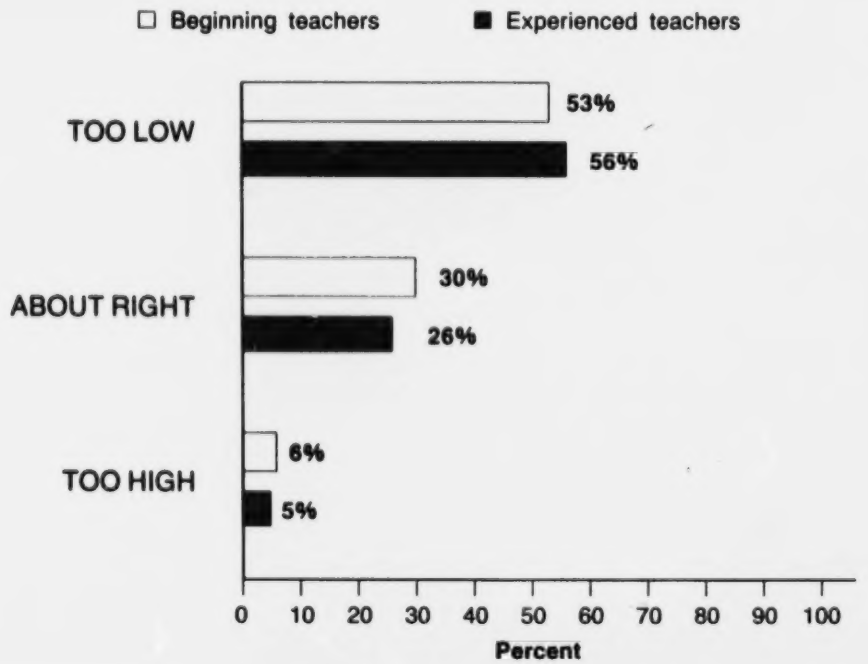
Suggested Salary Levels

The questions: *About how much do you think beginning school teachers in your school district* ***should*** *be paid per year?*

About how much do you think experienced public school teachers ***should*** *be paid?*

If the American public could determine teachers' salary levels, they would give beginning and experienced teachers substantial increases. On average, the public would pay beginning teachers $20,900, which represents an increase of $2,900 or 16.1 percent over the mean salary the public now thinks new teachers earn. The public would suggest a similar percentage increase for experienced teachers—17 percent or $4,400, corresponding to a salary level of $30,300 (**Table 13**).

FIGURE 7.
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHERS' COMPENSATION
Perception of Current Teacher Salaries



These average suggested salaries are close to the proposed salary levels—$20,700 and $31,400, respectively—recommended by the public when asked a similar question in the 1986 annual NEA/Gallup polls.

TABLE 13.
SUGGESTED AND PERCEIVED SALARIES: BEGINNING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

	Beginning teachers	Experienced teachers
Mean suggested salary	$20,900	$30,300
Mean perceived salary	18,000	25,900
Net difference	$ 2,900	$ 4,400
Percentage difference	+16.1%	+17.0%

NOTE: Not all survey respondents could provide an answer; see Table 11.

Demographic Analysis of Compensation Attitudes

The percent who feel salaries are too low, the mean suggested salary for experienced teachers, and the percentage difference between the mean suggested and mean perceived salaries for current teachers are displayed in **Table 14** to reveal differences in compensation attitudes by demographic subgroups. Except as noted, attitudes toward beginning teachers' salaries show the same basic patterns.

It is important to look at several indicators before drawing conclusions about compensation attitudes. For example, subgroup differences in the percentage difference between mean suggested and mean perceived salaries may be due to differences in salary perceptions rather than differences in suggested salaries.

Among the proportion who feel experienced teachers' salaries are too low, there are no differences by sex, race, party identification, political ideology, union membership, and NEA region of the country. NEA region does affect whether individuals think *beginning* teachers' salaries are too low; those in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific regions are less likely to think beginning salaries are too low, compared to those from the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions.

There are some socioeconomic differences in the belief that teacher salaries are too low:

- Individuals with higher levels of income and education are more likely to believe that salaries are too low than are individuals with lower levels of income and education.
- Individuals who come in contact with the schools (the young and those with children) are more likely to think salaries are too low than are individuals who do not regularly deal with schools (older persons and those without school-age children).
- Individuals who report knowledge about the schools are more likely to think teacher salaries are too low than those who report no knowledge of the schools.

There are few differences among socioeconomic subgroups on the suggested salary for experienced teachers and the percentage difference between suggested and perceived salaries. There is a tendency for the less educated, those with low incomes, and individuals with less knowledge about the schools to suggest the smallest increases in teacher salaries, but these differences are not very large.

Length of School Year and Teacher Compensation

The question: *Some people feel teachers don't deserve to be paid as much as those in comparable occupations because most teachers are not in the classroom two months during the summer. Others disagree, saying that teachers must use the summer months to plan for the next school year and to continue their education. Which comes closer to your opinion?*

The vast majority of the American public believe that teachers should be paid as much as others in comparable occupations despite the fact that teachers are not in the classroom in the summer. Eighty-two percent state that teachers deserve equal pay, while only 16 percent believe they do not deserve equal pay because of their time off. This view is uniform across demographic subgroups.

TABLE 14.
ATTITUDES TOWARD EXPERIENCED TEACHERS' SALARIES BY SUBGROUP

Characteristics	Percent who feel salaries are too low	Mean suggested salary	Suggested salary vs. perceived salary*	Number of interviews
TOTAL	**56%**	**$30,300**	**+17.0**	**(2,132)**
SEX				
Male	56%	$30,500	+16.0	(1,065)
Female	55	30,100	+18.0	(1,067)
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White	55%	$30,100	+16.6	(1,821)
Black	61	30,100	+19.9	(189)
Hispanic	59	33,000	+15.0	(89)
AGE				
18–24	65%	$31,100	+16.5	(308)
25–44	63	31,100	+19.6	(1,053)
45–64	46	29,100	+14.1	(548)
65+	41	28,800	+15.7	(218)
EDUCATION				
College graduate	68%	$32,500	+20.4	(658)
Other college	65	31,300	+19.0	(513)
High school graduate	49	28,900	+13.4	(245)
Less than high school graduate	43	28,200	+11.0	(213)
INCOME				
$50,000+	62%	$33,100	+19.5	(326)
$35,000–$49,999	64	31,100	+18.2	(342)
$20,000–$34,999	57	30,900	+15.3	(687)
$10,000–$19,999	54	28,000	+17.1	(427)
Less than $10,000	45	27,400	+15.6	(213)
CHILDREN IN SCHOOL				
Pre-school	62%	$30,300	+17.4	(179)
K–12	58	30,900	+17.9	(726)
Others	53	30,000	+16.3	(1227)
KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOLS				
Quite a lot	60%	$30,800	+18.0	(796)
Some	58	30,000	+17.2	(918)
Little or none	45	30,000	+12.3	(418)

*Percentage difference between mean estimates.

Willingness To Pay For Increases In Teachers' Salaries

Teachers' Salaries and Higher Taxes

The question: *Which one of the following categories best describes you?*

a. I favor more funds for increasing teachers' salaries even if it means higher taxes.

b. I favor more funds for increasing teachers' salaries only if it does not mean higher taxes.

c. I am opposed to more funds for increasing teachers' salaries.

The vast majority of the public (80%) favor additional funds for increasing the amount of money paid to teachers (**Table 15**). Slightly over half the people who favor such increases are willing to bring about the necessary increases through higher taxes (43%). A somewhat smaller proportion favor the increases but only if it does not affect their taxes (37%). Sixteen percent of the public say they are opposed to more funds to increase teachers' salaries.

NEA teacher members endorse increased teacher salaries more strongly than does the general public. Sixty-seven percent favor increasing teacher salaries even if it means raising taxes; 29 percent support increasing teacher salaries only if it does not mean higher taxes; and only 3 percent oppose more funds for teachers' salaries.

Among the general public, those who tend to be willing to pay higher taxes for additional funds to increase teachers' pay are Whites, respondents in the age group most likely to have school-age children (25 to 44), college graduates, respondents whose household income exceeds $50,000, residents of large cities or suburbs of large cities, Democrats, liberals, and those who say they know quite a lot about the schools.

Those who are particularly likely to say they oppose funds for increasing teachers' salaries include those 65 years old and older, the less well educated, low income respondents, those who hold politically conservative views, and residents of the NEA Northeast and Pacific regions of the country.

Among NEA K-12 teacher members, there is considerable variability among subgroups in willingness to pay for increases in teachers' salaries:

- Males, Whites, those over age 30, and those with at least a Master's degree are more likely to endorse funds for higher salaries, even if it means higher taxes, than are females, Blacks, Hispanics, those under age 30, and those with less than a Master's degree.
- Teacher members who have taught for under 5 years, who have contract salaries under $20,000 a year, or who teach at the elementary level are less likely than others to support increased funds for teacher salaries if it means higher taxes.
- Teacher members who have their children in public schools more strongly endorse increased taxation for higher teacher salaries than do members who have their children in private or parochial schools.
- Teacher members from the NEA Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions more strongly support increased taxes for higher teacher salaries than do teachers from the Western region.
- Democrats and those who consider themselves liberal are more likely to endorse funds for higher salaries, even if it means higher taxes, than are Republicans and conservatives.

TABLE 15.
ATTITUDES TOWARD INCREASED FUNDS FOR TEACHERS' SALARIES

Position	Teacher members	General public
Favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries, even if it means higher taxes	67%	43%
Favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries, only if it does not mean higher taxes	29	37
96% / 80%		
Oppose more funds for increased teachers' salaries	3	16
Don't know	1	4
Total	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

Changes In Attitudes Toward Increased Funds for Higher Teachers' Salaries

Overall willingness to support more funds for increased teachers' salaries—that is, the combined percentage who favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries even if it means higher taxes, and the percentage who favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries only if it does not mean higher taxes—is virtually unchanged for teacher members since last year's poll, but down 7 percentage points among the general public **(Table 16)**.

Among the general public, there is a drop of 11 percentage points in the proportion who say they are willing to pay via taxes. The portion who favor increased funds only if it does not mean higher taxes is up 4 percentage points, and the percentage who oppose more funds for teachers' salaries has increased by 6 percentage points.

Among K-12 teacher members, the portion willing to pay via taxes is down 14 percentage points, while the portion who favor more funds only if it does not mean higher taxes is up 12 percentage points. The portion who oppose is statistically unchanged at 3 percent.

It appears that the decrease in willingness to use taxes as a means of raising additional funds is, in part, an overall resistance to increased taxes of any kind. Other surveys suggest there has been a drop in those who are willing to increase taxes for other programs that would require additional funds. For example, between February and October of 1986, an NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey found both an 8-point drop in those willing to have income taxes raised, and a 5-point increase in those unwilling to have income taxes raised to help reduce the federal deficit. It also is worth noting that a tremendous amount of attention has been given to taxes and the new tax law since last year's NEA/Gallup annual polls.

A decrease in willingness to raise teachers' salaries is evident in the 6-percentage-point increase in those who say they oppose more money for teachers' salaries. This increased resistance to paying teachers more may reflect the fact that teachers received substantial increases in some places in the country; perhaps the respondents are satisfied that these increases are enough.

Of the general public, those most likely to show a decrease in willingness to support increases through higher taxes are Hispanics, those who describe where they live as a small city, and residents of the NEA Southeast and Midwest regions of the country. Those showing a lower-than-average decrease in willingness to pay via taxes include college graduates, those with incomes over $50,000 or under $10,000, and, especially, residents of NEA's Mid-Atlantic region.

NEA K-12 teacher members more likely to show a decrease in willingness to pay for higher teachers' salaries via taxes include Blacks and Hispanics, teacher members under 30 and over 49 years of age, and residents of NEA's Midwest and Western regions. Teacher members living in NEA's Pacific region show a lower-than-average decrease in willingness to pay via taxes.

TABLE 16.
CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD INCREASED FUNDS FOR TEACHERS' SALARIES

Positions	Teacher members		General Public	
	1986	1987	1986	1987
Favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries, even if it means higher taxes	81%	67%	54%	43%
Favor more funds for increased teachers' salaries, only if it does not mean higher taxes	17	29	33	37
	98%	96%	87%	80%
Oppose more funds for increased teachers' salaries	1	3	10	16
Don't know	1	1	3	4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(1,501)	(2,107)	(1,507)	(2,132)

Improving The Quality Of Education

Strategies to Ensure that Students Learn the Basics

The question: *People often criticize the public schools for not doing a good enough job of teaching students the basics—reading, writing, and math skills. I will read a list of some suggested ways to better ensure that students learn the basics. For each, tell me if you think this would help a lot, help a little, or not help at all to ensure that students learn the basics.* (Measures listed in **Table 17**.)

The public endorses a broad range of strategies to better ensure that students in the public schools learn the basics. Of ten options that were proposed, over two-thirds of the American public think that eight would "help a lot."

Three options are favored the most (**Table 17**). Eighty-three percent of the American public believe that increased attention to students by teachers will help students better learn the basics, implying a desire for smaller classes. The next most supported options are to require passing a standardized test in the basics for graduation from high school (81%, help a lot) and to enforce school attendance requirements (81%, help a lot).

Teacher members differentiate among the options more than does the public. Only three of the suggested measures win the "help a lot" rating from over three-quarters of NEA teacher members; less than two-thirds provide such a high endorsement for the other seven measures.

Teacher members rate the following measures the highest: providing more individual attention for students (84%), enforcing school attendance requirements (80%), and providing more opportunities for parental involvement in students' learning (80%).

TABLE 17.
RATINGS AND RANKINGS OF MEASURES THAT WOULD "HELP A LOT" TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN THE BASICS

Measures	Ratings		Rankings	
	Teacher members	General public	Teacher members	General public
Providing more individual attention for students by teachers	84%	83%	1	1
Enforcing regular school attendance requirements	80	81	2	3
Providing more opportunities for parental involvement in students' learning	80	76	3	4
Making passing grades a requirement for participation in sports and other extracurricular activities	65	75	4	5
Requiring remedial courses for students who fail to pass standardized tests	63	73	5	6
Requiring that students pass standardized tests in the basics to earn a high school diploma	62	81	6	2
Requiring students to take more classes in subjects like English and math	50	68	7	8
Requiring that students pass standardized tests to go from junior high to high school	45	68	8	7
Having school principals spend more time motivating students to meet higher academic goals	44	55	9	9
Requiring more homework	25	40	10	10

The options supported the most by teacher members tend to be supported most by the public. Teacher members and the public alike have least confidence in requiring more homework. The two areas in which teacher members differ the most from the public both involve standardized tests: the public supports requiring students to pass tests in the basics as a condition for progressing from junior to senior high school and for earning a high school diploma far more than teachers do.

The strategies evaluated in this question may be grouped into three general types or categories:

- **Increased rigor in the classroom**—more classes in English and math, increased enforcement of attendance requirements, and increased homework.
- **Increased student performance standards**—requiring passing grades for participation in extracurricular activities, requiring passing tests before progression to or graduation from high school, and requiring remedial courses for students who fail to pass standardized tests.
- **Increased parent, teacher, and principal involvement**—more individual attention from teachers, more time spent by principals in motivating students, and more parental involvement in students' learning.

A comparison of these three different types of strategies can be made by calculating the mean percentage of respondents who believe these types of measures would "help a lot" (**Table 18**). Such a comparison reveals that both NEA teacher members and the public are less likely to believe that increased rigor in the classroom will help a lot relative to other types of strategies. Teacher members and the public disagree, however, in their ranking of the other two types of options. Teacher members endorse mechanisms relating to teachers, principals, and parents more strongly than increased performance standards. Conversely, the general public ranks increased performance standards higher than efforts related to teachers, parents, and principals.

Generally, there are few demographic subgroup differences among the general public in responses to the measures, considered individually or as types of measures. Blacks and those 65 or older are more likely to endorse any of the suggested measures than are Whites and younger individuals. More differences show up among teacher members.

TABLE 18.
COMPOSITE SCALE ON TYPES OF MEASURES THAT WOULD HELP A LOT TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN THE BASICS

Types of measures*	Teacher members	General public
Increased parent, teacher, principal involvement	69%	71%
Increased student performance standards	59	74
Increased classroom rigor	51	63

*See above for a description of the types of measures.

With respect to measures requiring **increased parent, teacher, and principal involvement:**

- The attitude that students need more individual attention from teachers is widespread; there are no significant subgroup differences on this measure among the public or teacher members.
- Similarly, there is a pervasive belief in the potential effectiveness of increasing parental involvement. The only subgroup differences are among teacher members: Blacks, Hispanics, and those with preschool-age children believe this will "help a lot" more than do Whites and those with school-age children.
- There are some subgroup differences in belief in an increased role for principals in motivating students. Among the general public, Blacks, the elderly, those without a high school diploma, Democrats, and those with lower incomes are more likely to favor increased principal involvement than those who are White, are younger, have higher levels of educational attainment, are Republicans, or have higher incomes. Among teacher members, those teaching in senior high schools support an enhanced role for principals more than do elementary teachers; women more than men; Blacks and Hispanics more than Whites; the young more than others; and residents of the NEA Southeast region more than teacher members in the NEA Midwest region.

With respect to measures that involve **increased student performance standards:**

- There are no subgroup differences among the general public on the measures taken individually or as a set.

- There are a few differences among teacher members regarding requiring students to pass standardized tests before receiving a diploma. Conservatives, residents of the NEA Northeast and Southeast regions, and those over 50 years of age favor this measure more than liberals, residents of the Midwest and Western regions, and those under age 30.
- With respect to whether students would do better in the basics if they weren't permitted to participate in sports and extracurricular activities unless they had passing grades, the following differences among teacher members emerge: women, Blacks and Hispanics, conservatives, those who teach in a large city, regular classroom teachers, and those from the NEA Southeast region believe this would "help a lot" more than do men, Whites, residents of the NEA Midwest region, liberals, and those who teach in nonurban areas.
- The following subgroup differences emerge with respect to requiring passing tests in order to move from junior to senior high: higher salaried, older, more experienced (10 or more years) teacher members who are full-time classroom teachers, teach in senior high, or are from the NEA Northeast or Southeast regions believe this would "help a lot" more than do non-regular teachers, elementary teachers, the less experienced, lower salaried, younger teachers, and those from the NEA Midwest and Western regions.
- With respect to teacher member subgroup differences on the question of remedial courses for students who fail, females believe in this strategy more than men, Blacks and Hispanics more than Whites, Southeasterners more than those from other NEA regions, and specialist teachers more than regular classroom teachers.

With respect to support for measures that would require **increased classroom rigor,** there are considerable differences:

- Among the general public, Blacks and Hispanics, older individuals, recent graduates, and those who report little knowledge of the schools support requiring more classes in subjects like English and math than do individuals who are White, are younger, have school-age children, and report knowledge about the schools.

  Among teacher members, the following groups believe more strongly in more courses in English and math: women as opposed to men; Blacks and Hispanics more than Whites; those 50 years of age or older more than younger teachers; elementary as opposed to junior and senior high teachers; and residents of the NEA Southeast as opposed to teacher members in the Northeast and Midwest.
- Among the general public, Blacks, those 65 and older, the poorest, and recent graduates are more likely to favor increased homework than are Whites, the younger, those with higher incomes, and those with school-age children.

  There are particularly substantial subgroup differences in whether teacher members believe that requiring more homework will help ensure that students learn the basics. Older, more experienced, higher salaried teacher members, and those who teach in senior high, are more likely to believe in the strategy of increased homework than are younger, less experienced, lower salaried teacher members and those who teach in the elementary grades. Men, Blacks and Hispanics, and those from high income households endorse increased homework more than do women, Whites, and individuals from lower income households.
- Teacher members' view that more enforcement of attendance standards would help a lot is pervasive. A few subgroup differences appear: females, Blacks and Hispanics, and those with more than 20 years of teaching experience favor the suggestion more than do males, Whites, and those with less than 5 years of teaching experience.

Priorities Beyond the Basics

The question: *Other than the basics, the following three areas are often mentioned as needing more attention by the schools: science and technology, vocational and technical training, and the dropout problem. To which of these would you give the highest priority for improvement?*

When asked to rank three program areas other than the basics, the general public clearly gives highest priority to programs to deal with the dropout problem (42%), second highest to vocational and technical training, and least priority to programs in science and technology **(Table 19)**.

Teacher members' response pattern is quite different. Vocational and technical training ranks on top, followed (on the basis of a combined highest and second highest score to break a near-tie) by science and technology, with programs for dropouts of least importance among the three.

There are considerable demographic subgroup differences in where the public places its priorities. Subgroups often thought of as having liberal orientations —women, Blacks, those age 18 to 24, those with less than a high school diploma, those with lower incomes, Democrats, liberals, and residents of NEA's Northeast region—are more likely to place a higher priority on programs to deal with the dropout problem than males, Whites, those over age 25, college graduates, those with higher incomes, Republicans, and respondents from the NEA Western region. Wealthier and highly educated individuals are more likely than other groups to place highest priority on programs in science and technology.

There are also some subgroup differences among teacher members as to which area is given highest priority after the basics. Blacks and Hispanics, those under 30, liberals, and other than regular classroom teacher members favor dropout programs more than do conservatives, Whites, older teachers, and regular classroom teacher members. Individuals who are White or older, who do not have school- or pre-school-age children, and who are from the NEA Midwest, West, and Pacific regions more often see the next highest priority after the basics to be in vocational and technical training than do Blacks and Hispanics, the young, those with school-age children, and those from the NEA Mid-Atlantic region.

Evaluating School Performance

The question: *It is often difficult to tell how good a job the public schools are doing. Please tell how useful each of the following measures would be in helping you decide how well the schools are doing. First, what about:* (indicators listed in **Table 20**). *Would this be very useful, somewhat useful or not useful?*

The American public does not differentiate much among a number of different indicators of performance of the schools. When questioned as to which indicators would be most useful, roughly the same percentage report that functional indicators (such as the percentage of illiterate people in society or the portion who drop out of high school) are very useful as report that test scores are very useful (**Table 20**). In contrast, teacher members differentiate among the indicators of how well schools are doing: they place more credence in functional indicators than in standardized tests.

TABLE 19.
PRIORITIES FOR THREE AREAS BEYOND THE BASICS

Program area	Teacher members		General public		College-educated public
	Highest priority	Second highest priority	Highest priority	Second highest priority	Highest priority
Vocational or technical training	39%	37%	34%	40%	34%
Science and technology	30	35	21	33	36
Dropouts	30	26	42	23	28

TABLE 20.
RATINGS AND RANKINGS OF PERCENT WHO BELIEVE SPECIFIC INDICATORS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE ARE VERY USEFUL

Indicators	Ratings		Rankings	
	Teacher members	General public	Teacher members	General public
Percent of college freshmen in remedial courses	45%	49%	1	2
Percent of students dropping out of school	35	44	2	5
Percent of illiterate people in society	33	51	3	1
Scores on college entrance exams such as SATs or ACTs	24	49	4	3
Scores on standardized student achievement tests	22	45	5	4

Improving The Quality Of Teaching

Measures to Ensure Professional Competence

The question: *I will now read a list of some ways to ensure that teachers hired now and in the future are professionally competent. As I read each item, tell me if you think this would help a lot, help a little, or not help at all to improve the quality of new teachers.* (Measures listed in **Table 21**.)

The public believes that a number of different strategies are likely to help improve the quality of new teachers. When questioned about six different approaches, two-thirds of the American public believe all six would "help a lot" to ensure professional competence of teachers (**Table 21**).

While the public differentiates among these strategies, the overall picture is one of consistent endorsement. The most favored option is requiring students graduating from teacher training programs to meet specific graduation standards (82%). Tied for second are requiring teachers to pass rigorous exams evaluating their knowledge of the subject they will teach before certifying them (77%) and requiring teachers to successfully complete an internship under an experienced teacher before certifying them (76%).

When teacher members are asked about the six strategies to improve the quality of teachers, they clearly discriminate among them. They show strong support for four of the six options and considerably less support for the two others. Eighty-five percent of teacher members believe that requiring an internship under an experienced teacher would help a lot; 78 percent believe that specific graduation standards would help a lot; 72 percent support specific admission standards; and 60 percent support requiring teachers to earn a four-year college degree in the academic subject they will teach, with a fifth year of teacher training. While teacher members endorse more rigorous preparation for teachers, they do not back testing. Only 41 percent believe subject matter testing prior to certification would help a lot and only 25 percent believe testing in teaching theory and methods prior to certification would help a lot.

Among the general public, the attitude that the six measures would help a lot is pervasive. Demographic subgroup differences are minimal.

TABLE 21.
RATINGS AND RANKINGS OF MEASURES THAT WOULD HELP A LOT TO ENSURE TEACHER COMPETENCE

Measures	Ratings		Rankings	
	Teacher members	General public	Teacher members	General public
Requiring teachers to successfully complete an internship under an experienced teacher before being certified	85%	76%	1	3
Requiring students graduating from teacher training programs to meet specific graduation standards	78	82	2	1
Requiring students entering teacher training programs to meet specific admission requirements	72	72	3	5
Requiring teachers to earn a 4-year college degree in the academic subject they will teach and take a fifth year of teacher training	60	72	4	4
Requiring teachers to pass rigorous exams evaluating their knowledge of the subject they will teach before being certified	41	77	5	2
Requiring teachers to pass rigorous exams evaluating their knowledge of teaching theory before being certified	25	66	6	6

Teacher members do vary in their responses to the six strategies for improving the quality of teachers.

- There are just a few subgroup differences in **support for an internship:** women favor internships more than men, and elementary teacher members favor internships more than middle or upper school teacher members.
- With respect to **specific graduation standards,** there are likewise few differences: women favor such standards more than men; teacher members from NEA's Southeast region favor them more than those from other NEA regions; and those with non-school-age children favor graduation standards more than those with school-age children.
- With respect to **specific admission standards:** women, teacher members who are age 50 and over, those who have more than 20 years of teaching experience, those who have no school- or pre-school-age children, and residents of the NEA Southeast region favor this strategy more than men, teacher members who are under 30, those who have less than 5 years of teaching experience, teacher members who have pre-school- or school-age children, and residents of all other NEA regions.
- The subgroup variations on the strategies of requiring a **degree in the academic subject teachers will teach and a fifth year of pedagogical training** mirror those just described on admission standards with the following exceptions: there is no gender differential on this item, and teacher members who teach in urban schools favor this option more than those from rural ones.
- With respect to **tests in specific subject matter,** the following subgroup differences appear: more experienced, higher salaried, and higher family income teacher members favor this option more than less experienced, low paid individuals, or those with lower family incomes; those from the NEA Southeast favor this more than those from other NEA regions; teacher members from urban and suburban schools also favor this suggestion more than those from more rural schools.
- Last, with respect to **tests in pedagogy,** teacher members who have more than 20 years of experience, are over 50 years of age, are higher salaried, live in the Southeast, and are Black or Hispanic favor this option more than do individuals who are less than 30 years of age, have less than 5 years of teaching experience, are lower salaried, are White, and are from other NEA regions.

There is a general pattern in these teacher member subgroup variations. Southeasterners, women, and the older, more experienced, and higher salaried teacher members tend to believe that more of these strategies will help a lot than do men, those from the other NEA regions, and younger, less experienced, lower salaried teacher members.

The Value of a Fully Certified Teacher in Every Classroom

The question: *Some people believe that a good way to deal with rising costs in public education is to let teachers' aides and interns teach most classes with direction from a certified teacher. Others disagree, saying it is important to have a fully certified teacher in every classroom—even if this means raising additional monies through taxes, cutbacks in services, or other means. Which comes closer to your opinion?*

The attitude that each classroom should have a fully certified teacher is strong, widespread, and consistent with other findings that the public and teacher members support rigorous standards for classroom teachers to improve the quality of teaching. The general public and teacher members alike do not endorse the use of teacher aides and interns to deal with rising costs of public education. Only 13 percent of the public and 3 percent of teacher members support letting aides and interns teach most classes; 84 percent of the public and 96 percent of teacher members feel it is necessary to have a fully certified teacher in every classroom, even if it means raising additional monies through taxes, cutbacks in services, or other means (**Table 22**).

TABLE 22.
THE IMPORTANCE OF A FULLY CERTIFIED TEACHER IN EVERY CLASSROOM

Position	Teacher members	General public
Keep a certified teacher in every classroom	96%	84%
Let aides and interns teach most classes	3	13
Don't know	1	3
Total	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

The belief that every classroom needs a certified teacher is extremely pervasive. The only statistically significant subgroup difference is that among the general public, women (87%) are more likely to support this position than are men (80%).

Discipline In The Schools

The annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of Public Attitudes Toward the Public Schools have revealed that since 1969, the public has considered discipline to be one of the greatest problems facing the public schools. Except for 1971, when it ranked as the second greatest problem behind lack of financial support, and for 1986 and 1987, when it ranked second behind the use of drugs, discipline has consistently been considered the greatest problem facing the public schools for the 18 years of the PDK/Gallup polls.

The 1987 NEA/Gallup Public and K-12 Teacher Member Opinion Polls sought to learn more about sentiment on reasons for the discipline problem, responsibility for the problem, and the extent of public schools' potential role in dealing with the discipline problem.

Causes of the Discipline Problem

The question: *Many people say that discipline is the biggest problem facing the schools today. I will read a list of some possible reasons to explain why discipline is such a problem. As I read each item, tell me if you feel this is a* ***major*** *reason for the discipline problem, a* ***minor*** *reason, or* ***not*** *a reason.* (Reasons listed in **Table 23.**)

When queried about 14 different reasons for discipline problems in the public schools, the American public and NEA K-12 teacher members place more responsibility on reasons outside the control of schools and teachers. The finding stems from an analysis of the ratings and ranking of the individual reasons evaluated, as well as the results of a composite scale created from these reasons.

The public most frequently reports the following as the four major reasons for disciplinary problems in the school: parents' failure to discipline youth in the home (84%); increased use of drugs and alcohol (83%); breakup of traditional family values (72%); and schools' and teachers' lack of authority to deal with the problem (67%). **Table 23** shows that the results suggest that the public places less blame on teachers them-

TABLE 23.
RATINGS AND RANKINGS OF MAJOR REASONS FOR DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS IN THE SCHOOLS

Reasons	Ratings		Rankings	
	Teacher members	General public	Teacher members	General public
Breakup of traditional families and family values	87%	72%	1	3
Parents fail to discipline their children at home	87	84	2	1
Increasing use of drugs and alcohol by young people	68	83	3	2
Teachers have to deal with too many students	67	60	4	6
Schools and teachers lack authority to deal with the problem	59	67	5	4
Punishment is not strict enough and rules are often not enforced	58	63	6	5
Society today permits too much freedom for young people	57	56	7	8
Children aren't interested in learning because parents don't care enough about their education	56	59	8	7
Students rebelling against authority is part of growing up	24	44	9	11
Teachers fail to establish and maintain control in the classroom	24	52	10	9
Teachers are not properly trained to deal with such problems	23	43	11	12
Lack of training in moral and ethical values by the schools	20	38	12	14
Schools don't emphasize student learning and achievement enough	19	45	13	10
Teachers aren't properly motivating students to learn	14	42	14	13
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)		

selves. For example, only 43 and 42 percent, respectively believe either that teachers are ill-trained to deal with such problems or that teachers are inadequately motivating youths to learn.

There is considerable similarity between the patterns of response of teacher members and the general public, although teacher members discriminate among the 14 reasons more than does the general public. Of the four options selected most often by teacher members as major reasons for discipline problems in the schools, three are top selections by the public as well. Of the four options selected *least* often by teacher members as major reasons for disciplinary problems, three are also selected least often by the public.

Teacher members most frequently report the following as the four major reasons for disciplinary problems in the schools: the breakup of traditional families and family values (87%); parents' failure to discipline their children at home (87%); increased use of drugs and alcohol by young people (68%); and teachers having to deal with too many students (67%). The options that K-12 teacher members mention the least often as major reasons for discipline problems are: teachers are ill-trained to deal with such problems (23%); lack of training in moral and ethical values by the schools (20%); inadequate emphasis by the schools on student learning and achievement (19%); and teachers aren't properly motivating students to learn (14%).

Responsibility for the Discipline Problem

Differences between the general public and K-12 teacher members in intensity of opinions about reasons for the discipline problem become apparent from results of the analysis of a composite scale developed from the responses to the 14 individual reasons. The scale, which categorizes each respondent's combination of answers on all 14 items as placing responsibility for the discipline problem predominantly on parents and society, on the schools, or on both, reveals that teachers overwhelmingly believe that parents and society are responsible for such problems (**Table 24**). Eighty-one percent may be categorized as placing responsibility on parents and society, but only 7 percent believe the schools have major responsibility, and 12 percent believe the schools share equal responsibility with parents and society. In contrast, 58 percent of the public believe that parents and society are responsible for the disciplinary problems in the schools, 21 percent believe that the schools are responsible, and 21 percent believe both are equally responsible.

TABLE 24.
COMPOSITE SCALE ON SOURCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS IN THE SCHOOLS

Source of responsibility	Teacher members	General public
Parents/society responsible	81%	58%
Schools responsible	7	21
Equal responsibility	12	21
Total	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

Differences between the general public and teacher members in intensity of opinion about the responsibility for the schools' discipline problem cannot be attributed to differences in education. Scale results from the college-educated portion of the general public are quite similar to those of the general public as a whole, and they differ substantially from results from K-12 teacher members.

The notion that parents and society bear the major responsibility for discipline problems in the schools is pervasive and does not vary among the general public or teacher members by demographic or socioeconomic characteristics. There are no differences in scale results by race/ethnicity, educational attainment, party identification, or political ideology. Among the general public, differences are apparent by sex and age, whereas among teacher members, differences are apparent only by sex. Women and older individuals are more likely to hold families and society responsible, whereas males and the young are more likely to hold schools responsible. Female teacher members are more likely to hold families and society responsible than are male teacher members.

Can Schools Do More?

The question: *Some people think that by making changes in the classroom and in the educational system, the public schools can do a lot more to deal with the discipline problem. Others think there is not much more the schools can do because the root of the discipline problem is in the home or in the society in general. What is your opinion?*

Public response to a question on whether the schools can do much more to deal with the discipline problem is consistent with public perception of responsibility for

the problem. Fifty-eight percent place the responsibility for the discipline problem with parents and society, and 58 percent believe there is not much more the schools can do about the discipline problem (**Table 25**).

When asked directly, teacher members believe that the schools have more of a role than their score on the discipline responsibility scale might suggest. Although fully 81 percent of teacher members are categorized as placing responsibility predominantly with parents and society, only 64 percent state that they believe there is not much more the schools can do because the root of the discipline problem is in the home or in society in general. Thirty-five percent of teacher members and 40 percent of the general public believe that the schools can do a lot more to deal with the discipline problem.

Among the general public, there is very little variation in response by demographic characteristics. There are some differences among teacher member subgroups, however. Teacher members under 30 years of age, individuals with less than 5 years of teaching experience, liberals, those with children in private or parochial school, and teacher members with other than regular classroom assignments are more likely to believe that the schools can do more than those who are over age 40, those with more than 20 years of teaching experience, conservatives, those with children in public schools, and classroom teachers.

TABLE 25.
POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS IN DEALING WITH THE DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

Role of the schools	Teacher members	General public
The schools can do a lot more to deal with the discipline problem	35%	40%
There is not much more the schools can do	64	58
Don't know	1	2
Total	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(2,107)	(2,132)

A survey of classroom teachers conducted for the U.S. Department of Education between October 1986 and January 1987 found that of 13 possible actions to improve discipline problems, three were judged "very productive" by a majority of respondents: increased student self-discipline developed at home (74%), smaller classes (63%), and increased parental support for discipline (62%). Measures including stricter enforcement of rules against misconduct generally, increased followup by principals on disciplinary referrals, immunity from lawsuits when discipline is enforced well within guidelines, increased use of positive reinforcement for good behavior, and principals making discipline a higher priority were rated as "very productive" by about 45 percent of respondents.

Public/Private School Enrollment Patterns

Nine in ten (91%) of the teacher members who have school-age children send them to public school (**Table 26**). NEA teacher members are more likely than the general public to send their children to public schools (teacher members, 91%; general public, 87%). Only 8 percent of teacher members polled send any of their children to either private or parochial school. This figure compares to 11 percent of the public who have children in private or parochial schools. These figures are unchanged for teacher members relative to last year's NEA/Gallup annual polls, and show a slight decrease in private/parochial school enrollment on the part of the general public.

Those particularly likely among the public to send their children to private or parochial schools include those with incomes over $50,000 and college graduates. There are no significant differences among NEA teacher members.

TABLE 26.
PUBLIC/PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PATTERNS*

Type of enrollment	Teacher members		General public	
	1987	1986	1987	1985
Public school	91%	91%	87%	83%
Private/parochial school	8	9	11	16
Don't know/refused	1	0	2	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Number of interviews)	(991)	(676)	(726)	(515)

*Based on respondents with school-age children.

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